

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for what time is required.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

A FAILING OF THE SENATE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, in 45 minutes or so, we will be turning to an important issue which people have spoken to over the course of the day, an issue we will be spending the evening on. It is an issue that is one of the worst failings of this institution in our history, a failing surrounding a refusal to act on our part against lynching, against vigilantism, against mob murder. It has been a shame in many ways. We have to be careful when we use that word, but when we look at the reality of missed opportunities to act, we can, with justification, use the word "shame" on the institution and a shame on Senators who didn't just fail to act but deliberately kept the Senate and the whole of the Federal Government from acting and from acting proactively.

Although deep scars will always remain, I am hopeful we will begin to heal and help close the wounds caused by lynching. Four out of five lynch mob victims were African American. The practice followed slavery as an ugly expression of racism and prejudice. In the history of lynching, mobs murdered more than 4,700 people. Nearly 250 of those victims were from my State of Tennessee. Very few had committed any sort of crime whatsoever. Lynching was a way to humiliate, to repress, to dehumanize.

The Senate disgracefully bears some of the responsibility. Between 1890 and 1952, seven Presidents petitioned Congress to ban lynching. In those same 62 years, the House of Representatives passed three antilynching bills. Each bill died in the Senate, and the Senate made a terrible mistake.

The tyranny of lynch mobs created an environment of fear throughout the American South. Lynching took innocent lives. It divided society, and it thwarted the aspirations of African Americans. Lynching was nothing less than a form of racial terrorism.

It took the vision and courage of men and women such as Mary White Ovington, W.E.B. DuBois, George H. White, Jane Adams and, of course, fellow Tennessean Ida Wells-Barnett to pass Federal laws against lynching and put an end to the despicable practice.

Ida Wells-Barnett, indeed, may have done more than any other person to expose the terrible evils of lynching. A school teacher from Memphis who put herself through college, she became one of the Nation's first female newspaper editors. A civil rights crusader from her teens, Ida Wells committed herself to the fight against lynching after a mob murdered her friends—Thomas Moss, Calvin McDowell, and Henry Stewart.

These three men, driven by their entrepreneurial energy, opened a small grocery store that catered primarily to African Americans. They took business away from nearby White business owners. Driven by hatred and jealousy, by rage and prejudice, an angry White mob stormed their store. Acting in self-defense, Wells' three friends fired on the rioters. The police arrested the grocers for defending themselves. The mob kidnapped all three from jail, and all three were murdered in the Memphis streets.

These brutal murders galvanized Wells into action. Her righteous anger, blistering editorials, and strong sense of justice further enraged Memphis bigots. They burned her newspaper presses and threatened to murder her. Wells moved to Chicago and became one of that city's leading social crusaders. Wells' book "Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases" and her dogged investigative reporting exposed millions of Americans to the brutality of lynching. In a nation rife with racism and prejudice, Ida Wells and her colleagues began the civil rights movement. They helped bring us integration. They paved the way for equality. And they taught all of us that racism is a terrible evil.

After many years of struggle, after many setbacks, and after much heartache, they won. From President Truman's Executive order ending segregation in the Armed Forces to the 1964 Civil Rights Act, a series of civil rights laws moved the Nation toward legal equality.

But no civil rights law is as important to our Nation's political process as the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

It enfranchised millions of African-American voters and it brought many black politicians into office.

Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act will be up for reauthorization in 2007. President Reagan signed into law a 25-year reauthorization in 1982.

Section 4 contains a temporary preclearance provision that applies to Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and parts of Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, Idaho, and North Carolina.

These States must submit any voting changes to the U.S. Department of Justice for preclearance. If the Department of Justice concludes that the change weakens the voting strength of minority voters, it can refuse to approve the change.

While I recognize that this can impose a bureaucratic burden on States acting in good faith, we must continue our Nation's work to protect voting rights. That is why we need to extend the Voting Rights Act.

Quite simply, we owe civil rights pioneers such as Ida Wells nothing less.

I hope the day will come when racism and prejudice are relegated completely to our past. This resolution is a positive step in the right direction.

Transforming our Nation requires that we recall our history—all of it. We

can become a better people by celebrating the glories of our past—but also our imperfections. That includes continuing to do our utmost to protect voting rights for all Americans.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CHAFEE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I ask unanimous consent that the debate time on the Griffith nomination be yielded back and the Senate proceed to legislative session in order to consider S. Res. 39.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now return to legislative session.

APOLOGIZING TO LYNCHING VICTIMS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 39) apologizing to the victims of lynching and the descendants of those victims for the failure of the Senate to enact anti-lynching legislation.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the clerk proceed with the reading of the resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill clerk read as follows:

Whereas the crime of lynching succeeded slavery as the ultimate expression of racism in the United States following Reconstruction;

Whereas lynching was a widely acknowledged practice in the United States until the middle of the 20th century;

Whereas lynching was a crime that occurred throughout the United States, with documented incidents in all but 4 States;

Whereas at least 4,742 people, predominantly African-Americans, were reported lynched in the United States between 1882 and 1968;

Whereas 99 percent of all perpetrators of lynching escaped from punishment by State or local officials;

Whereas lynching prompted African-Americans to form the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and prompted members of B'nai B'rith to found the Anti-Defamation League;

Whereas nearly 200 anti-lynching bills were introduced in Congress during the first half of the 20th century;

Whereas, between 1890 and 1952, 7 Presidents petitioned Congress to end lynching;

Whereas, between 1920 and 1940, the House of Representatives passed 3 strong anti-lynching measures;

Whereas protection against lynching was the minimum and most basic of Federal responsibilities, and the Senate considered but